



Media Release

Visual and Performing Arts Foundation Announces Eighteen Teachers Who Will Receive 2021–22 VAPA Enhancement Program Funds

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San Diego, CA—Eighteen San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) teachers will receive awards to underwrite Visual and Performing Arts instruction, experiences, and materials, funded by the VAPA Foundation’s 2021–22 VAPA Enhancement Program.

[The Visual and Performing Arts Foundation](#), an independent nonprofit that supports the San Diego Unified School District’s Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) programs, funds arts enhancements not covered by a school’s budget. The VAPA Enhancement Program, or VEP, enables any San Diego Unified teacher to apply for funds to enhance the quality of and access to arts education in the classroom or school.

This year VEP will fund artist residencies in dance, theatre, visual arts, media arts, and music. Funding for arts equipment includes recording equipment, microphones, ukuleles, and restoring a baby grand piano. Each successful applicant linked the request to ongoing curriculum goals. Requests for funding ranged from \$500 to \$2,500.

>> Michael Camacho, Executive Director of the VAPA Foundation, is available for interviews, as well as teachers and their students who will be receiving VEP grants for their VAPA programs. Please contact us to set up an interview.

Among the VEP recipients is Jason Berman at Millennial Tech Middle School, who will be able to fund students using various multimedia tools such as the Adobe suite to create onscreen graphics for videos, as well as to create illustrations to animate them. In the school’s computer lab, ten computers

will be set up as drawing stations by attaching drawing tablets, allowing the students to be more creative in making digital art.

“In our school district the ‘non-rostered’ teachers (those without a set class list), such as P.E., Science and VAPA Prep teachers, are not allocated classroom technology like Boxlight/Promethean Boards, document cameras, and surround-sound speakers,” says Teresa Behnke, visual arts teacher at Hardy Elementary. “The equipment I have is so substandard that it barely works to use for guided drawings or other whole-group guided activities. With the VEP funds I can purchase a projector, document camera, larger screen, and wireless speaker to enhance my teaching and bring my students’ art class experience into the 21st century. This equipment will support the whole school VAPA Program and allow me to conduct art night classes for families and the Hardy Elementary community.”

At Oak Park Elementary, an ongoing partnership with the David’s Harp Foundation teaches digital music production to at-risk fifth graders, imparting the skills of music composition and production and fostering relationships that encourage the most difficult and struggling students to re-engage with the school community. Their digital music program currently focuses on using cutting edge technology to teach students to compose, record, edit, and present original music. This year, the VEP grant of \$500 will provide equipment to add teaching the skills of recording live instruments to their already successful program.

“Our students at Crown Point Junior Music Academy have a beautiful relationship with music, but due to our specific focus, our students have less exposure to the other art forms,” says Matthew Rhoades, visual arts teacher at Crown Point Junior Music Academy. “The program I will fund with this grant will allow our fourth graders to dive deeply into the visual arts with a collaborative residency with Erin Pennell of Art FORM, a local San Diego arts organization that is known for its unique approach to creative reuse in art-making. Three times throughout the school year, Ms. Pennell will visit our classroom and lead self-portrait workshops that are not about learning to draw. Instead, students will utilize recycled materials and found objects to create a self-portrait that reflects each student as they perceive themselves from the inside. After the series is complete, we will create a gallery showing and invite the other students, families, and the community to share in the evolution of their artwork.”

Michael Camacho, Executive Director of the VAPA Foundation, says, “We were excited to see such innovative ideas from our teachers and see them develop unique partnerships with arts and culture organizations including the David’s Harp Foundation, Villa Musica, Guitars in the Classroom, The Rosin Box Project, San Diego Ballet, Classics 4 Kids, and Art FORM San Diego.”

This year, the VAPA Foundation has awarded a total of more than \$30,000 and nearly \$130,000 in VEP awards since its inception in 2017. This funding was made possible in part by a sponsorship from UC San Diego. In addition, donors from the community have recognized the link between in-depth arts learning and gains in school attendance, graduation rates, college and workforce readiness, civic pride, and cultural awareness.

2021–22 VAPA Enhancement Program Recipients

Art Banymandhub, Crawford High School

Restoration of a broken baby grand piano

Matthew Lyons, Oak Park Elementary School

Partnership with David's Harp Foundation to teach recording of digital music skills

Sara Freese, Crown Point Junior Music Academy and Whitman Elementary

Purchasing ukuleles for 4th and 5th grade students' music instruction

Julie Myer, Standley Middle School

Master classes, full ensemble, and small group coaching by Villa Musica for string orchestra students

Jessica Curiel, San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts

Funding the Senior Dance Major Exhibition Showcase Project and Master Class Series Project

Teresa Behnke, Hardy Elementary

Funding for a projector, document camera, large screen and wireless speaker to enhance teaching art classes, including night classes for families and the Hardy Elementary community

Amy Chagnon, Point Loma High School

After-school theatre program, in which students perform a fall play and a spring musical

Sarah Ekedal, Grant TK-8 School

Support for the Art Kitchen, where students think creatively while learning technique and a hands-on approach to all materials in a converted cafeteria kitchen

San San Blain, Wangenheim Middle School

Math + Music = Success, Guitar in the Classroom's program to improve math learning and engagement while building community through music-making and songwriting

William McClain, Carver Elementary

The Ballet Machine, The Rosin Box Project's arts integration program that combines Common Core Language standards and VAPA dance standards in a ballet setting

Maria Cerda, Pacific View Leadership Elementary

The Ballet Machine, The Rosin Box Project's arts integration program that combines Common Core Language standards and VAPA dance standards in a ballet setting

Margaret Ballante, Jefferson Elementary

The Ballet Machine, The Rosin Box Project's arts integration program that combines Common Core Language standards and VAPA dance standards in a ballet setting

Denise Carroll, Grant TK-8 School

Funding a San Diego Ballet teaching artist in the second-grade classroom to teach a series of Master Classes

Jason Berman, Millennial Tech Middle School

Converting computers in the multimedia arts program into drawing stations by attaching drawing tablets

Lisa Tessaro-Love, Crown Point Junior Music Academy

Bringing two Classics 4 Kids performances the students in two different in-school assemblies

Matthew Rhoades, Crown Point Junior Music Academy

Collaborative residency with Erin Pennell of Art FORM, a local San Diego arts organization that is known for their unique approach to creative reuse in art making

Jessica Rogawski, Morse High School

Creating a legacy at Morse through public art, starting with a student mural in the auditorium celebrating the diversity and talents of the student body

Meera Ramanathan, Zamorano Fine Arts Academy

Funding a kinetic art project made from bicycle wheels and colored yarn

About the VAPA Foundation

The VAPA Foundation believes that all students benefit from an education rich in the arts—from field trips to museums and theaters, to bringing professional artists into the classroom, to training teachers in their craft or best practices for arts integration. The VAPA Foundation is committed to connecting students and teachers to resources beyond the scope of a school budget and to recognizing student achievement in the visual and performing arts via recognitions, concerts, and collaborations.

For more information, please visit VAPAFoundation.org.

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